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THE MOTHERS' COMPANION

"Singing in the village choir." *(Drawn by Mary J. Dicksee.)*

THE MOTHERS' COMPANION

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"May and Elsie, being the tallest, threw the chain over her." p. 3.

THE MOTHER'S CHAIN; OR, THE BROKEN LINK.

BY EMMA MARSHALL,

Author of "Eaglehurst Towers," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOTHER'S CHAIN.

It was early morning, and the sun had not yet risen above the horizon, when a girl of twenty awoke her sister, who was sleeping in the same room, saying—

"Is it too soon to wake the little ones? You know we promised to call them."

"What?" in a sleepy voice; "what, Mag?"

"It is mother's birthday. Surely you have not forgotten? and we promised Elfin and Heartsease to go out to gather anemones in the wood—the windflowers mother is so fond of."

"They die as soon as they are gathered," Elsie said, turning round on her pillow, and adding, "It is much too early to get up. Do be quiet, Mag; you are always so fussy."

"You are always so lazy," Mag said, laughing. "But I will give you grace till the clock strikes six, and then up you shall get."

Mag could not find it in her heart to return to bed. All the world seemed awake and full of rejoicing on that May morning.

The birds sang, as only birds can sing in May. The young emerald leaves danced in the breeze, and whispered to each other that the sun was coming. The jackdaws flew in and out of the church tower just opposite her window, and from the fields beyond the cattle lowed in soft, plaintive murmurs, mellowed by distance.

It was the twenty-fourth of May, and the Queen's birthday, as well as that of the mother of the four girls, of whom Mag was the eldest.

She was a dark-eyed maiden, with a vast amount of superfluous energy and resolution to overcome difficulties—full of dreams of what she would do, if only she had the chance given her, and a little—perhaps more than a little—restless desire for change, and a field of action beyond that which lay before her in her own home.

Her mother, Mrs. Armytage, was the widow of a physician, who had died early from over-work and perpetual strain upon his powers.

He left his widow with a very slender income, which was helped out by the falling in to her of a cottage in the village of Besthorpe, which had been left to her on the death of her only remaining aunt, her father's sister.

To this cottage, then, the family removed, and had lived in retirement during early childhood and girlhood contentedly. But, as time went on, the spirit of the age reached even little Besthorpe, and then came that thirst for service, which has resulted in the supply of so many nurses, and teachers, and assistant-mistresses, who have left their homes and gone out into the world.

This picture has two sides, like every other picture; and the unoccupied, frivolous young women, intent on pleasure and on a settlement in life, have become fewer and fewer, and may be said to decrease yearly in numbers.

Gentle Mrs. Armytage had no sympathy with these longings. She belonged to a former generation, to whom change and separation were amongst the ills of life. With strict economy it was not necessary, she said, for her girls to leave home and train for any of the many situations open now to girls between eighteen and thirty. She felt a maternal pride in the praise they often won, and would hear with satisfaction the exclamation of other mothers,—

"You are happy, Mrs. Armytage, in being able to keep your children under your own roof; to be sure they are very young, and you will have to part with them some day."

That "some day" was indefinitely postponed, and Mrs. Armytage called in no help for education. Mag was a host in herself, and Elsie had a gift for music, while the two little ones were her pupils, as she had been her mother's; for Mrs. Armytage had, in her younger days, been a good musician.

The family would not have been complete without a boy, and he came conveniently after his sisters, and was now a little over seven years old. His mother fondly called him the clasp which held her chain together—the chain formed by her four young daughters—the unbroken chain as yet, with all the links complete.

As the village clock struck six, Mag again called her sister, and went to wake Elfin and Heartsease, and tell them to hasten to get ready for the expedition to the wood.

"Shall we wake Bernard, Mag?"

"Don't let us. He will make such a fuss and noise, and wake mother, and that will spoil all."

"Have you got the thin wire for the chain, Mag?" asked Elfin, sleepily, and with a prolonged yawn.

"Yes, of course I have. Make haste, and be quiet, for fear of disturbing mother."

In another half hour the four sisters were on their way to the wood, or copse, which clothed the slope, hardly to be called a hill, on which the church and village stood. Heartsease and Mag had the spirit of the party centred in them, and were far ahead of the other two, who came along more slowly, stopping every now and then to tie a loose shoe-string, or, in Elsie's case, to pin up a stray lock of hair.

The wood was a lovely sight on that early summer morning. The sun's level rays slanted through the branches of the beeches, and the floor beneath was one golden-bronze carpet, made by the fall of the leaves of many a previous summer.

Then here and there, in companies, waved the delicate blossoms of the wild flowers, some pearly white with the inner ring of delicate yellow stamens, some just tinged with faint pinkish mauve on the under side, and some scarcely opened from the green calyx.

"Be gentle with the anemones, Elfin: they want tender handling," Mag said. For though she was so energetic and quick in her movements, she was always tender with flowers and little children: a sign of a noble nature, this. Nothing shows the disposition more clearly than the rude tearing down of flowers, often left to die, and the rough disregard of the feelings of little children.

A German poet has said, "Flowers and young children are the ornaments of God's earth," and those who look upon them as such treat them with reverence and tenderness.

The baskets were quickly filled with anemones, bluebells, and a few late primroses, which were hiding away amongst their large leaves, as if to show they knew their prime was over, and that they must say good-bye to this fair earth till another springtime came.

Then the girls went to a well-known fallen trunk of a tree, and the younger ones put the flowers into small bunches, arranged with their graceful leaves, and Mag wove them into a long chain.

"There must be five big knots of bluebells for each to take hold of as we throw it round mother's neck. Won't she be pleased!"

"I wonder we never thought of it before! don't you, Mag?" said Heartsease.

Mag, having finished her work, was gazing with her dark eyes absently at the blue distance, seen through a gap in the trees.

"It is odd how many new things there are—new thoughts, I mean—new ideas," continued little Pansy.

"Yes; there are plenty of new things for us all to learn, and we have only to use our eyes and the senses God has given us, to find them," said Mag.

"How to make a chain of wild flowers, with knots of bluebells, for instance."

Elsie spoke in a tone Mag was well used to—a tone which implied a little indifference and a little contempt.

"It was put into Mag's head by mother saying on Sunday 'we made a chain of love round her,'" said Heartsease. "I understand."

"Yes, Heartsease, you always *do* understand," was the answer. "But come," she said, rousing herself from her dream and springing up, "we must go home now. Bernard will be up, and mother wondering where we are."

"We have our real presents to get ready for the breakfast table," said Elfin. "I wish mine were prettier. I was made to buy it, and now I have bought it I think it is ugly, and I saved up all my allowance for a month to buy something."

"Mother is sure to like it. Don't be silly, Elfin; besides, who *made* you buy it?" said Mag.

"*You* did," was the prompt reply, "because you were in such a hurry to get out of Miss Ball's shop to overtake Lisa Barker."

"Nonsense!" was all Mag said, in answer to this; but the swift colour came to her cheek, and she bent her head over the basket of flowers which had been left, when the chain was finished, to hide her blushes.

Just as they were turning into the lane leading to The Knoll, which was the name of their cottage, they met a poor woman crying bitterly.

"Why, Mrs. Turner, what is the matter? Is any one ill?"

"No, miss; not ill in body, but I am ill in mind, and that's worse. My Agnes has just gone off in Mr. Bond's cart to Crayminster."

"Where is she gone?"

"To be what they call a nursery governess now-a-days. Dear me! to think of it. She has just been set up with too much book-learning, and she has got to support her father, and talked high and mighty about education, and so she has been and left me with six children on my hands and a sick husband. She says of course she will send me money as soon as she gets her 'celery'—she doesn't call it wages—but I'd rather have a loving child at home than any money she can get by leaving it."

"I wonder Agnes did not consult my mother," Elsie said. "I know she would not have approved of her leaving home. It is a shame, I think."

"Well, miss, Agnes did say one of the young ladies at the Knoll told her that she ought to make good use of her schooling, and so did Miss Barker at the Hall. She talked a great deal about her duty, and she is gone to a friend of Miss Barker's. I must get along as I can, but it is rather heart-breaking, that it is."

"Was it you who advised Agnes Turner to leave her mother?" Elsie said, turning sharply to Mag.

"You had better ask Lisa Barker that question, but if I am asked what I think, I should say that I see no harm in a girl earning her living in the way she is most fitted for."

They were now seen by Bernard, who was eagerly expecting his sisters.

"The things are all on the breakfast table," he said, "and mother is not come down yet. Have you made the chain? Let me look!"

"Take care, take care, Bernard, or you will break it. Do take care."

"Let us take it up to mother's room and put it on there," said Elfin.

"No, we had better wait till she comes down, and really I must go and make myself tidy," said Elsie; "my hair won't keep up."

"Yes, and change your shoes, Elfin and Heartsease; the grass in the field was very wet."

Mag or Margaret or Maggie Armytage, as she was called by turn, though Mag was the favourite name in her own home, was left alone in the porch, while her sisters ran away to complete their hasty morning toilette, and Bernard had gone to inspect for the hundredth time the birthday cake, which had been made in honour of his mother's birthday, and was a triumph of the old servant's skill. "Iced and almonded," as she said, "like the best from any confectioner's in the land."

Mag was always prim and neat in her dress. Her hair was braided tightly over her small, well-shaped head, and her gowns, made by her own hands, fitted to perfection.

Nothing could be more becoming than the blue cotton frock she wore to-day, which, unlike her sister's, had been carefully looped up over her short under-skirt of thick striped "skirting," and with no fringe of mud round the bottom as Elsie's had.

Mag was lost in thought. Yes, it was true that she had advised Agnes Turner to leave home, and send her earnings to her parents. There was something ignoble in a girl who had passed the highest standard of "the Code," and had been pupil-teacher, and acquitted herself so well that she had excellent testimonials, going to her father's cottage, swarming with little children, and he able only to earn a scanty living in a village. To be recommended by Miss Barker to a high family in Crayminster was surely a step upwards, and Mag had given it as her opinion that Agnes was right to go.

But was *she* right to advise this step? The girl next to Agnes in age was only thirteen. There was a heavy dull boy, who came between them, who was employed on a farm, and there was a younger boy who ran errands for the general shop, and so added a little to the weekly wages, which were indeed very insufficient for the needs of the family.

"It will be a mouth less to feed, and Agnes was such a superior girl. Yes, I think I was right. But after all, Lisa Barker had more to do with it than I had, and old Miss Hopkins is quite behind the time. People forget how fast the world is going on. Even dear mother cannot understand the wide field which is opening for women. She thinks we must all go on in the hum-drum fashion, and look forward to nothing but settlement in life."

Mag's rosy lips curled as she came to this last part of her meditation, and she added aloud, "As if marriage were the *only* future a woman had to look forward to. I wish I were Agnes Turner and had a chance; but what is the use of wishing?"

And now the bell rang for breakfast, and there was a sound of coming feet on the stairs, and the children all gathered in the little hall of the Knoll to receive their mother. They held the chain in their hands, and as Mrs. Armytage came to the last step, smiling on them with fond maternal pride, Mag and Elsie, being the tallest of the daughters, threw the chain over her, and then the children joined hands, and so escorted her to the dining-room where, on the snowy table cloth, there was a centre vase of flowers, and some mysterious little parcels with "For dear Mother" written on them.

"Do you like the chain, mother?" Elfin always hungered for praise. "Do you like it?"

But little Heartsease said: "Of course mother does like it, only she can't tell us so now."

From poor Mrs. Armytage's eyes there were a few quiet tears falling—tears of thankfulness, and tears of sad memories, for she had been on many birthdays a loved and loving wife, and her husband's premature death was a life-long sorrow to her.

"May God keep my chain unbroken," she said, "and may the links be stronger and stronger as time goes on. We are all together, there is no vacant place; for that let us thank God."

And then the chain was laid round the table, the knot of bluebells at each of the places of the five children; and then old Sarah came in, with her clean white apron and neat cap, to prayers.

"Wish you a many happy years, ma'am," she said, "and may you be long spared to the children."

Mrs. Armytage smiled through her tears, and held out her hand to her old friend, saying—

"May I long have you for a friend and faithful servant, Sarah."

Then the reading of the chapter followed, verse by verse, and then a prayer, ended by the words of the General Thanksgiving, which seemed to run in her heart and fall naturally from Mrs. Armytage's lips.

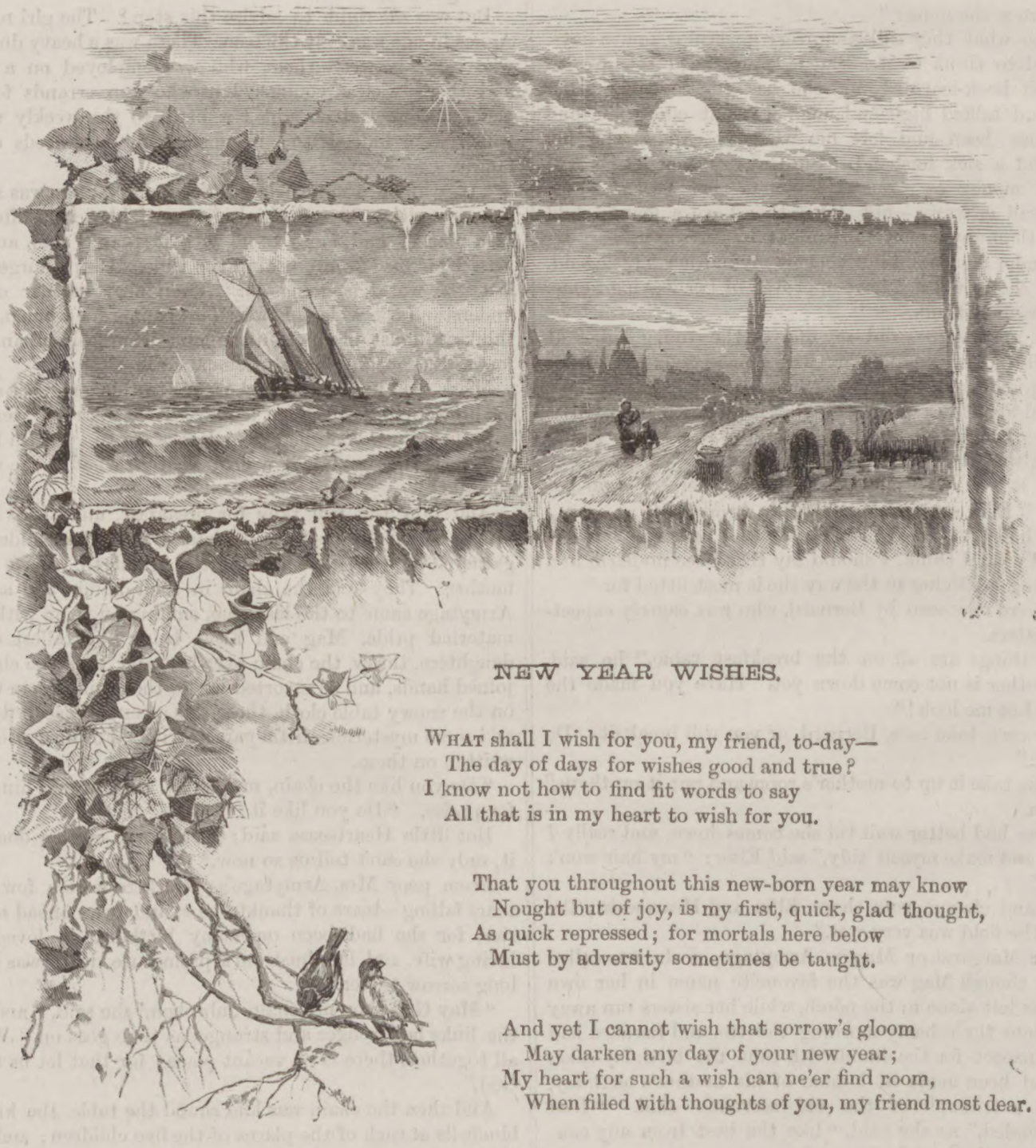
When they were seated at the breakfast table, Mag presiding over the coffee, she turned suddenly to move a plate from the tray, when Bernard called out—

"Oh! Mag, Mag! you have broken mother's chain, just by your own bunch of bluebells."

"Never mind, I can soon mend it again," Mag said.

"But you will never make it look the same any more," Heartsease said, sadly; "the heads of the bluebells are snapped off; it will not be the *same* again."

(*Continued on page* 17.)



NEW YEAR WISHES.

WHAT shall I wish for you, my friend, to-day—
The day of days for wishes good and true?
I know not how to find fit words to say
All that is in my heart to wish for you.

That you throughout this new-born year may know
Nought but of joy, is my first, quick, glad thought,
As quick repressed; for mortals here below
Must by adversity sometimes be taught.

And yet I cannot wish that sorrow's gloom
May darken any day of your new year;
My heart for such a wish can ne'er find room,
When filled with thoughts of you, my friend most dear.

So, then, my heartiest wishes shall be these—
That God will guide, and keep, and bless you, friend;
Sending you joy or sadness, as He sees
Most fitting for your welfare in the end.

D.

TWILIGHT THOUGHTS FOR WIVES AND MOTHERS.

Standing Aside.

There comes a time to all of us when—maybe for only a space, maybe for ever—we have to fall out of the ranks of the active and those who are engrossed by the battle of life; to stand aside and wait for renewed strength, or the beckoning hand of that grim shadow whose bony, fleshless fingers "hold the key of all the creeds."

It is at first almost impossible to believe that we must pause in the fray, that our weapons have become too heavy for us, and that our blinded eyes and aching limbs mean—not a five minutes' pause, not the lack of a simple night's rest—but a positive and actual intimation that our day is over; that, as far as in us lies, we have done all we can of active service, and that we must give place to others who, eager to begin their work, push us aside, or, at best, glance impatiently at us, and wonder when we shall perceive for ourselves how feeble we are, and how much we are hampering instead of forwarding the world's work.

It is quite impossible to credit that we, who have been the head of the house, the pivot on which all turned, the very mainspring of our immediate surroundings, are not quite what we have been; and in this struggle to assert ourselves, to be quite sure we are not lazy, and that it really is ill-health, and not mere "giving way" that has so changed us, we often do more harm to ourselves than enough. Therefore, once having heard the doctor's fiat, "Rest, and plenty of it," we must make up our minds to our fate, while at the same time that fate need not be a hard one if we gracefully accept it, and if we do not struggle unduly against the unpleasant fact that age or ill-health has taken up its abode with us, and that we are neither as young nor as well as we once were. Being ill! growing old! Surely nothing requires more tact to become or to be; surely nothing requires more patience, more faith.

To be ill without feeling really ill, is, perhaps, the worst fate of all. To look well to our friends and acquaintances, to have nothing much the matter as long as we rest, but to faint and suffer much if we forget the doctor's orders; to be probably scoffed at as a *malade imaginaire*, a lazy creature who takes her ease and allows her daughters to slip into her shoes. Can there be any harder fate to bear well and intelligently? I think not. Yet it is a cross that comes to many women, and that, come when it may, always finds them unprepared and unable to bear it.

At first there may be slight symptoms only; sharp pain in the chest, an aching side, shorter breathing, general *malaise*. But when the doctor speaks it is best to resign oneself, and make up one's mind to stand aside from the actual fight; for once he has spoken, a struggle makes the fate more certain, the end nearer, and, maybe, a valuable life is lost because the owner could not stand aside, but must, as of old, join in the fray, must do her share yet in the battle of life. But realise that active fighting is over, and when the first sharp pang is past, our fate is not so hard as it appeared to be at the primary glance.

It is sad to lose our youth and good looks maybe, and the active share we took in all that went on; to be no longer the guiding spirit, the working bee. But that once allowed, there is another side to contemplate; the side that is not quite as sunny perhaps, but that may be quite as happy if we accept it peacefully and do not refuse it utterly because it is not as fresh and sweet as what we have been enjoying.

Are there no joys in seeing the fulfilment of the promise of the children's early years, in realising the harvest we ourselves sowed in those first happy days when life and we were young together, in seeing other more skilful hands than ours—and yet so like our own hands that we can hardly tell them apart—arrange the house and deck the vases with flowers, tend the younger children, and finally, return to us some of the care we gave them, until we feel ourselves young again because responsibility and care are taken from our shoulders, and because, instead of continually thinking for others, others are taking thought for us again? We are still there to give the casting vote. Nothing can be really done or decided without us. We are yet paramount; but piece by piece our work is done for us, and bit by bit, inch by inch, we yield up the reins, until we almost forget we ever held them, and become quite content to know that this is so.

But when this time comes to us, it must not come to find us entirely unprepared, entirely without weapons with which to fight. We must not be idle, even though we are forced to stand aside. Above all, we must never lose our hold or our interest in life itself. However badly we may be off, however much we suffer, we can be sure there is always someone worse off than we are ourselves, someone even more suffering, and we should spend our time of probation in doing as much for them as we possibly can. After all, this time of waiting is one of the greatest privileges we can have, for were we snatched away in a moment from our household, there would be none left to take our place, none to keep all in going order, no one in any measure prepared to take up our work. As it is, we can direct all until the young hands of our successors are as strong as ours, their young brains as capable of directing as were our own in our very busiest days.

It is impossible to reach middle life, to approach the borders of old age, without understanding that there is no one to whom we are absolutely indispensable, that there is no place another cannot fill as well: nay, better maybe than we ourselves have done. We shall be missed, aye and grievously mourned for. We shall have lived to small effect if this is not so; but there will come a time when all sorrow for us will be forgotten; when on earth, at least, we shall be as if we had never been; and if we are called upon early to stand aside and wait, we can make up our minds that while we will go cheerfully when we are called, we will yet do as much as possible for others without unduly fettering the actions of those who must perforce be more in the middle of the warfare than we are ourselves.

And, after all, why should we not be content to stand aside? We have had our day; we have done our share of work; we have had our share of pleasure, and we should be thankful for an evening-time of rest and freedom from care. For an evening time like that beautiful sunset hour in summer or early autumn that we all prize so much, when, tired of the day's work, or noise, or pleasure, we sink back into our chair, we hear the mingled sounds of voices from the workers still a-field—we hear the children singing across the river; and as we watch the flood of golden and crimson radiance that means the sunset, we only realise our own fatigue, pleasantly remembering a day's work well done, and looking forward hopefully to the night when all must sleep, all rest, to awake again to another glorious summer day, another round of work and rest.

Is it better to have the day's work before us, than to know all is done to the best of our powers, all finished and

folded away, waiting only the verdict of the Master? Ah! glorious as is youth with its lovely face, its golden hair, its eager eyes, it has all its troubles before it, its weary disappointments, its mistakes, its sorrows and tears, as well as its smiles and pleasures, its hard work, as well as its rosy rest; it is yet more glorious to know we have lived through it all, that our work is over, and that that which is laid away is our best—our very best—done all, as far as in us lay, to the honour and glory of God. Ah! that is the keynote of it all. We can stand aside cheerfully, we can wait patiently, if in all humbleness we can say we have fought a good fight; we have finished our course; and we wait upon God, waiting only for the last call that shall end our time of standing aside, and bring us once again into active service in another, holier, happier, brighter world than this!

J. E. Panton.

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF CLOTHES.

That thing is beautiful which is best
Fitted for the purpose for which it was made.—*Socrates.*

It is trite as it is true, that so long as we dwell among men and bear any part in the world's work, it is our duty to brighten the circle in which we move. We all understand the value of pleasant smiles and kindly manners, but do we rightly estimate the moral and social influence of dress, "that tissue which man wears as his outmost wrapping and overall, wherein his whole self lives, moves, and has its being"? Much might be written on the metaphysics of dress, and the sympathies it evokes; it is in intimate relationship with many political sympathies; social sympathies are indexed in it; and artistic sympathies are necessarily a part of it. It is the outward and visible sign of the mortal who wears it, indicating, to an extent we are often unaware of, the wearer's character and tastes.

I hope there will come a time when it will be no slur on a woman, young or old, to say, "she thinks a great deal about dress." That time will not come until we realise the influence of our clothing upon health, temper, worldly credit, and upon our friends and family. Not that the adorning of our bodies should engross time which belongs to other duties, to study, exercise, or social intercourse; but we entirely agree with Mrs. Haweis that it is everyone's bounden duty to make himself or herself attractive, and use the time which can legitimately be spared for dressing, intelligently and to the best advantage. I have known women with whom nature has dealt hardly in regard to beauty of face and form, so adorned and beautified by graceful and artistic dress that any lack has been entirely veiled. Men are far behind women in the desire for the beautiful in dress, though they have made much progress of late years; some of us can remember the time when the universal use of black transformed the whole sex into mutes, while the white neckcloths made them all appear stiff-necked.

We are accustomed to hear fashion railed at by many as if it were a monster, turning everything to the advantage of a man-milliner, and with the sole aim to chase one extravagance away by speedily giving us another. Yet it is a tendency worth studying, and has occupied many great artists; we read that fashions were designed by Holbein, Jan Van Eyck, and Michael Angelo, when at the zenith of their popularity. With all its vagaries, fashion is the outcome of the love of beauty, although it cannot be denied the longest-lived fashions have fulfilled none of the three requirements of beautiful dress, which are, to protect, to conceal, and to display.

Our clothes should never contradict the natural lines of the body. It needs no practised eye to declare that the unnatural curves caused by such fashions as tight-lacing and tight waist-belts are out of harmony with nature. Most things unnatural are ugly, and so curiously does ugliness involve some element of harm that all immoderate forms of fashion are injurious as much to health as to beauty. All undue tightness should be avoided in dress; tight-lacing, of which we have heard so much and for so long that we erroneously think it must have died out; tight neckbands and collars; the tight waistbelt, which doctors tell us is more injurious than lacing, and which is common among boys and men also, we must condemn, too, as much on account of their falseness to beauty as injury to health; heels too high, cumbersome and heavy draperies dragging down the body and impeding free movement, and heavy head-dresses, which cause head-aches, debility, and, as no physical ailment is without its corresponding mental disturbance, irritability, nervousness, and failure of intellectual power.

One of the pleasantest signs of the times is the return to simplicity in children's fashions, especially in the case of girls. Boys, on the whole, have suffered little from the vagaries of fashion. The days when our little maidens were transformed into miniature women, without freedom to run or move their limbs in healthy play, have passed away, and the children are reaping the benefit. We have still much to learn in this particular, but mothers who look seriously at the question of their daughters' future, who see in them the mothers of another generation, will gladly adopt any improvement likely to promote their growth and health. Dr. Richardson advises the mothers of England "to let the girls be dressed just like the boys; make no difference whatever in respect to them, give them knickerbockers if you like; with these exceptions, let the under garments be of a little lighter material, and be supplemented by a dress, so that the girls may be well clad and yet look little girls cap-à-pie."

The *Lancet*, a few years ago, was much criticised for suggesting that light colours should be worn in the dark days of winter instead of the dark hues so much in vogue. Yet the *Lancet* was scientifically correct, and fashion is pointing in the same direction. Light-coloured clothing is both the healthiest and the warmest; it is the colouring nature gives the animals in the arctic regions who most require warmth, and we, too, should find it superior in this respect to heavier and darker garments. In this country, and particularly in towns, the extensive use of white would be impracticable on account of the rapidity with which it would soil, but why not substitute grey? It is light, warm, and artistic, and would bear much usage.

The use of heavy black draperies for mourning is a custom which cannot be too widely condemned, and we are happy to believe it is in its last days. That it in any way indicates the sorrow, or depth of sorrow, felt by the bereaved is a fallacy credited by no sane person. In this, as in most other matters of dress, custom and fashion are the arbitrators.

The use of bright, good colours in children's dress has a wonderful effect upon their temper and spirits. If we would see our little ones happy and gay, we must not despise the matter of judicious choice in their dress. Let it be bright, comfortable, and emphatically pretty. To be the ugly duckling among a gaily dressed group of schoolfellows will cause a sensitive child an agony scarcely credible to one whose childhood's days are but a shadowy memory. Let the mother whose child is weary and fractious, moping away a long winter afternoon and unwilling to settle to anything, take the little one and give it a smart "party-pinafore" and a bow or two of bright ribbon, and she will find, unless the child is ill, that sunny temper and smiles have come with the gay attire. Grown people, as well as children, are sensitive to colour and shape in their surroundings; have we not all felt how much easier it is to wear a bright and good-tempered smile under a new bonnet, or how much more leniently we judge the faults and failures of friend or child or maid when we have on a dress which we know fits well and suits us?

Unsuitable dress tends to deteriorate the mind. Ruskin tell us "a fault in feeling produces a fault in style," and the axiom can truthfully be transposed. A fault in style, an unmeaning shape, an inharmonious colour, a useless ornament, lacking beauty because purposeless, are sins against simplicity, honesty, and taste, and, if persisted in, lower the standard of those feelings in the mind.

The beautiful, which is always the suitable, should be cultivated, for it is not only right but elevating. To look upon graceful lines and harmonious colouring, even though we may not be sensitive enough to be jarred by their opposite, is stimulating and refreshing after the hardy dry soil of the working world, and brings back memories of youth, feelings of tenderness, and the softening influences of retrospect. Dress has no speech nor language, but still its influence is strong, and, unconsciously perhaps, our moods are reflected in the styles, colours, and textures we adopt.

It is not only fashion which has assigned to every ceremony of life its appropriate robes. There is much that is beautiful and suggestive in the custom which gives to infancy its long robes, to happy childhood bright joyous colours, to innocent maidenhood the more delicate hues, to be followed by the snowy bridal robes, and then the rich warm tints of dignified matronhood, and then, at last, the spotless robes of those "who walk in white."

ISABEL SUART ROBSON.

HOME.

THE rooks fly nestwards calling
  Mournfully from the sky,
Twilight is greyly falling
  Soft as a lullaby.
Oh night! Oh darkness! come:
And call the toiler home!

The last red sunbeams glimmer
  Where the tall branches hold,
Amongst their shadows dimmer,
  Spangles and sparks of gold.
Oh night! Oh darkness! come:
And call the weary home!

The silent mere is glassing
  One newly-risen star,
The latest light is passing
  To morning realms afar.
Oh night! Oh darkness! come:
The wanderer would be home!

The gloom is fill'd with voices
  Mysterious and deep,
Nature no more rejoices,
  The mournful heavens weep.
'Tis dark, the night is come;
But we are safe at home!

Oh lovely is the dawning,
  The sun's unclouded light!
Oh golden-fresh the morning,
  With new-born blossoms bright!
But not till night shall come,
May haste the toilers home.

Fear not the darkness falling
  On life's brief, working day,
But hear the Father calling
  To cheer our lonely way—
"'Tis night! Oh children, come!
I wait for you at HOME."

SHIRLEY WYNNE.

IN AND ABOUT THE KREMLIN.

In the heart of Moscow—the old metropolis of the mighty Russian Empire—one finds the world-wide famous Kremlin. Of itself, the great citadel is almost a town, being quite two miles in circuit. Moscow, also, is built in a circular form. A jumble of the grotesque and the magnificent, this ancient city, first built in 1147, has suffered many vicissitudes by fire, but, again and again, has risen from its ashes more splendid than before. Even the mines sprung by order of Napoleon when the French relinquished possession of their capture, failed to destroy the city, though enormous havoc was done.

The Kremlin is, in point of fact, an enclosure—surrounded by massive walls, 7,280 feet in circumference—containing churches, monasteries, palaces, arsenals, museums, and other buildings, the domes and cupolas of which are bewildering in number. The entrances through these walls are by means of gates—five in number—two of which have remarkable legends regarding them. That belonging to the *Spiasski Vorata* or Redeemer's Gate is as follows: "Over it has hung, since the foundation of the city, a picture of the Saviour, which is an object of the greatest reverence to every Russian, from the Emperor to the lowest country peasant, and neither the one nor the other would dare to pass under it without removing his hat. The outriders of splendid equipages, the princes in the same, the bearer of despatches who rushes in on matters of life and death, all remove their hats and hold them in their hands until they pass through to the other side. . . . Through this gate all Russia's returning heroes have passed in triumph; up to this gate has the victorious Tartar Horde time after time advanced, without ever being able to find an entrance. The French tried to remove the picture, thinking the frame was solid gold, but every ladder they placed against the wall fell broken in two! They then attempted to batter the wall and picture with a cannon, but the powder would not ignite! They built fires under the gun, but when it did explode it was backward, bursting into a thousand pieces, wounding the artillerymen, but leaving the picture unharmed."*

On gaining an entrance into the Kremlin, the first object of attraction is, probably, to all visitors, the *Bolshoi Devoretz*, the Large Palace, the interior of which is superbly magnificent. On the first floor we are dazzled by the gorgeous apartments of the Emperor and Empress, the drawing-room of the latter being furnished in white silk with gilt mouldings, and her cabinet in red silk, while in her dressing-room is a mantle-piece of malachite. To ascend the staircase, which is of solid granite, with walls of scagliola, there is a lift specially for Her Majesty's use. The state apartments at the top of this staircase surpass imagination in their size and grandeur. Going through the hall of St. George, dedicated to the military victories of Russia, and that of St. Alexander, gorgeously furnished in pink and gold, we reach the hall of St. Andrew, a room 160 feet by 68 feet in size,

The Kremlin, Moscow.

* Fetridge's Handbook for Travellers in Europe.

and necessitating two thousand and ninety-five candles to light it at night. Beyond this we find a state drawing-room, furnished in green brocade; a bedroom in white brocade with its mantelpiece of jasper and pilasters in mosaic of verd-antique.

But all this splendour is only the leading up to still greater magnificence. Wending our way through the Gold Court, the ancient state-rooms of the earliest sovereigns, we come to the flight of steps known as the Beautiful Staircase, which is only used on solemn occasions, such as when the Emperor goes to the Cathedral of the Assumption, but which, however, Napoleon and his marshals did not scruple to use on taking possession of the Kremlin.

Arriving at the Treasury, we stand well-nigh appalled at the *Arabian Nights*-like splendours, the thrones of the Tzars, and their crowns of priceless gems. One throne—that of Alexis, brought from Persia—is studded with 876 diamonds, 1,228 rubies, and countless pearls and turquoises. Close to it is an orb enriched with 58 diamonds, 89 rubies, 50 emeralds, 37 pearls, and 26 sapphires. This, we learn from Fetridge, together with "a crown, a collar of enamel and precious stones, and a chair with a piece of the true Cross, was sent to Vladimer, Prince of Kiev by the Greek emperors Basilius and Constantine .... A wardrobe contains the coronation robes of Catherine I., a masquerade dress of the same sovereign .... and on each side the boots of Peter I. and Paul I." Then follow more thrones until we reach that of Boris Godunoff, presented by the Shah of Persia in 1604, which is studded with unlimited turquoises, pearls, and rubies. In its neighbourhood is the magnificent mitre-shaped crown of John, with its 900 diamonds, surmounted by a diamond cross rising from a ruby. But the crown of crowns is that made for Catherine I. by Peter the Great's orders, and worn by the Empress Anne; it contains no less than 2,536 diamonds. Finally, satiated with jewels, we turn our horrified gaze upon another object of interest before leaving the Treasury, namely, upon the dreaded staff of John the Terrible, containing a sharp point, used by that amiable sovereign for transfixing the feet of those who offended him, and we remember with a shudder that his eldest son was killed by him in this way.

Emerging from the Kremlin out into the open, we find our way to the *Ivan Veliki* tower, the home of the most celebrated bell in the world—the *Tzar Kolokol*, or King of Bells. To quote

The Kremlin Walls, Nijni Novgorod.

our American authority, ". . . . it was cast in 1730, in the reign of the Empress Anne. The tower in which it hung having been burned seven years later, it fell, and remained buried in the earth for one hundred years, when it was placed upon its present pedestal by order of the Emperor Nicholas. It is almost impossible to give an idea of its immense size, and it must be seen to be appreciated. Its height is over 21 feet and its circumference 67 feet; its weight is 400,000 pounds, and, at the present price of the material, it must be worth £50,000. . . . Another bell in the tower weighs 64 tons, but looks like an ordinary steamboat bell when compared with the 'King of Bells.' There are also small silver bells, of exquisite tone, on the highest tier of the tower. All these bells are rung on Easter Eve, and produce a beautiful effect."

Another object commanding attention in the Kremlin is the Cathedral of the Assumption, where the grand ceremony of crowning the emperors takes place. Among the many wondrous relics it contains is a golden Mount Sinai, within which is a gold coffin holding the Host, while on the top of the mount stands Moses, bearing in his hands the tablets of the law, all of pure gold. There is also an immense Bible, presented to the cathedral by the mother of Peter the Great. The binding, which is covered with emeralds and other precious stones, cost over £200,000. Here are also what are fondly imagined to be a nail from the true cross, a robe of the Saviour, and a portion of that of the Virgin.

Behind the cathedral is the "House of the Holy Synod," where is manufactured the *mir*, or holy oil, with which all Russian infants are christened instead of water. This celebrated oil is only made—every three years—of the choicest olives, and is sanctified by a few drops of what is supposed to be the identical oil used by Mary Magdalene in anointing the Saviour's feet. Every article employed in the making and putting up is of solid silver.

Though feeling as if we could never digest the splendours of the crowded Kremlin, we plunge into the midst of more great public buildings, chapels, universities, the public museum, and, in particular, the justly celebrated riding school, quite the largest room in the whole world, whose roof is unsupported by either pillar or prop of any description. Here an area is enclosed, 560 feet in length and 158 in breadth; the ceiling is flat, and the exterior of the roof but slightly elevated. The interior is heated by at least twenty large earthenware stoves, which rise nearly to the ceiling; and here, in the most intense cold, the troops are enabled to perform their exercises, which would otherwise be suspended by the severity of the weather. Two regiments of cavalry are able to go through all their manœuvres and evolutions in this vast space.

A remarkable insight into the enormous advantages to man accruing from science, is gained by a visit to the winter market of Moscow. Here, after the winter frosts have fairly set in, the live stock is killed, and the manner of preserving it is in this way: Immediately after slaughtering, before the flesh has time to cool, the carcases are exposed to the intensely cold, icy atmosphere, which at once, seals up the juices and thus enables the whole supply of the city to be kept on hand and in safety. A further reason for this proceeding is to avoid the expense and trouble of feeding the animals during the long, terrible winter months.

But, all too briefly, we must bring to a close our description of the almost barbaric splendours of Moscow, and its mighty heart, the Kremlin.

TO MY MOTHER.

Oh, how can I yield thee, in days that are nearing,
  Belovèd and blessèd, afar from my home?
Cold, cold grows my heart in a quiver of fearing—
  I dare not give ear to the footsteps that come.

Thou more than a mother, whose tresses of beauty
  Gleam white as the snows that the moonlight hath kissed,
Oh, fair, sunny face, smiling bliss into duty,
  Oh, sweet, patient feet that earth's brightness have missed!

So long have I watched thee, and soothed thee, and tended,
  My *child* in thy weakness, my *mother* in love!
Oh, how can I bear it when vigils are ended,
  And lilies are weeping thy slumbers above?

So oft, oh, so oft have I gathered thee, dearest,
  And hushed thee to sleep 'mid the wearying pain;
But what when Another is clasping thee nearest,
  And thy patient eyes never bless me again?

Oh, fain would I keep thee for ever and ever—
  Methinks thou wilt need me wherever thou art—
And strange will be life when God bids us to sever,
  And lifts thee, my darling! too high for my heart.

And yet, in the twilight as oft I behold thee
  So quietly waiting the call that is near,
I think that His arms must be longing to fold thee,
  Since *He* knoweth all of thy journeyings here.

And though not a murmur hath told us of weakness,
  Perchance Jesus knows thou art feeble and fain,
And ready to go, in thy trust and thy meekness,
  Where ended for ever are sighings of pain.

My darling! since dews of unspeakable yearning
  Rise up as I muse of thy days that are past,
What marvel that Christ to thy need should be turning,
  And holding His arms to the weary at last?

Yet, oh, when His pity hath gently bereft me,
  When thou shalt be healed in His kingdom of grace,
Still, still may the looks that I treasure be left thee,
  My mother! with heaven e'en now in thy face.

Margaret Haycraft.

THE ART OF NURSING.

BY JOSEPHA CRANE.

Author of "Semi-detached," etc., etc.

I.—The Nurse.

When illness comes to a home, the natural desire on the part of the family is to give the sufferer the best possible care. Where purse and inclination permit, a trained nurse is often sent for; but very frequently this is not, for various reasons, possible. The patient has to be nursed by some one who, perhaps, with the best intentions and kindest of hearts, has no experience of illness, possesses no knowledge of physiology, and who feels very much at sea as to what is required of her.

These short articles are intended to help those who have had no training, or but little experience, to do this work well; for well it can be done by all who use their common sense, and exercise tact, observation, and patience. These latter qualifications, as well as good temper, are necessary; and it is also an obvious fact that some are naturally better fitted for the post than others. All, however, called by circumstances to this work are bound to try and do their best, remembering that nursing is an art—"one of the fine arts"—as Florence Nightingale called it, and that it can be learnt; natural aptitude, of course, telling in the learner's favour.

It is best, in case of illness, for one person to take the responsibility, and considering herself accountable to the doctor for the patient's well-being, allow others to relieve her, but not to take her place as head. One head is sufficient; half-a-dozen people, all claiming to be first, only cause confusion.

As a starting principle, recollect that, trained or not, a nurse is the doctor's handmaid, and not his rival. The cases are extraordinary indeed where the best trained nurse is justified in taking the law into her own hands and disobeying the doctor. Her duty ever is to obey him implicitly, and should his orders clash with her own judgment, the latter must give place to his commands.

Common sense will guide you in many respects. It will teach you to be practical concerning yourself and your patient. With reference to yourself, you must know that if you keep in good health you are more likely to be of service to the sufferer than if, neglecting yourself, you become weak or ill. Cleanliness is of very great importance; and as it is most ridiculous to suppose that one part of your body needs more washing than another, you should have daily ablutions, either by a bath or the less comfortable but as effectual means, viz., plenty of water, soap, a sponge, and friction with a rough towel. On the palm of your hand alone are three thousand five hundred and twenty perspiratory pores on every square inch, and every one of these is the opening of a little tube, about a quarter of an inch long. In every square inch of the skin of your hand alone there are eight hundred and eighty-two inches of drainage. This marvellous system of little drain-pipes is carried on all over your body, and it is not possible for this beautiful provision of nature to do its work unless there is perfect cleanliness, so as to remove all the dust and dirt that will accumulate daily.

To keep yourself well you should try and get all the rest you can; and often the difference of another voice and manner is a little change to the invalid if some one relieves you. Always write down the directions of the doctor, and should you leave anyone in temporary charge, be sure and tell them exactly what is to be done during your absence, and never think it too much trouble to write down your instructions.

You should get six hours of undisturbed sleep every night; and if that be not practicable, try and make it up by sleeping in the daytime. The six hours' sleep should be, if possible, taken not in the patient's room; and though in some cases it is best to lie down in your dressing-gown, so as to be able to attend to him instantly, if required, it is more refreshing and resting to be quite undressed for the sleep that is so needful for your own health.

If, however, you have to sleep in the sick room, if the patient is weak and his voice naturally low, then tie the end of a long piece of tape to your finger, giving the other end to the patient, or fastening it with a safety-pin to his pillow or sheet within easy reach of his hand.

The nurse should go out every day for exercise and fresh air, and, before doing so, tell the patient that she is going. People in general dislike mysteries, especially when about small and unimportant matters, so that it is better to say that you are going out than to leave the patient in ignorance of how long you are likely to be or wondering where you are. If you can avoid it, do not come into the sick room with your walking things on, and do not put them on in the room. Small things annoy and jar upon a person who in health could perhaps never be accused of being easily fidgeted.

Never whisper in a sick room. To do so is most irritating to the patient. Speak in a low, distinct voice, and if you have to say anything to a third person which the sufferer is not to hear, say it outside the room.

A firm, light tread should be characteristic of the way in which you walk. To creep about stealthily is very unpleasant, but light-soled shoes should be worn so that all unnecessary noise is avoided. Needless to say, you should never wear high-heeled boots or shoes, or anything that rustles. Dress improvers, long trains, jewellery, and particularly rings, are much in the way. You should select a pretty dress, as it is more pleasing for your patient to see you in it; but let it be simple, and in most cases it is best to wear something that will wash. In nursing a patient with any infectious disorder this latter is essential. Have a small pincushion in your pocket, and scissors near at hand.

Should you have to sit up at night do not wrap yourself up in a shawl which is apt to catch in handles of drawers or corners of tables, thereby causing much commotion, as well as hindering your movements. You will find that you will be much better able to bear sitting up at night if during the time you take, not alcoholic stimulant, but strong tea, coffee or beef tea. It is also well to have some noiseless occupation, such as crochet or knitting, which you can do in the dim light, provided that it *is* noiseless and no clicking of needles can be detected, as it will serve to keep you awake. A small noise is often much more irritating to a patient than a great one, and both must carefully be avoided.

Try and get your own meals regularly: eat as much as you require.

Unless a patient asks you to read aloud to him, do not do so, and never crackle a newspaper or noisily turn over the leaves of any book you are reading yourself. Never sit upon a patient's bed.

Tact is very necessary. Do not express surprise or astonishment which may alarm your patient, but if there is anything unusual remember to write it down on the paper you should always keep by you, on which you record anything the doctor needs to know.

To argue with a patient is a very bad plan. You should decide for him, and if your decision does not please him, change it, if you can do so without disobeying medical orders. Never think aloud, but do what is necessary without talking about it. Be very careful what you speak of to your patient. To tell anyone lying in bed, with little else to think of beyond his own sufferings, of that bad accident to a train you have just been reading about, or anything gloomy or depressing, is very cruel. Should people ask you in the presence of the patient how he is, give as cheerful an answer as you possibly can.

To be a good nurse you should be very observant. Observation is a talent which can be cultivated, and it is one most valuable in tending the sick. Without staring, and thereby annoying the patient, you should watch him closely; being more particularly careful to notice any changes that take place. Observe how the patient takes his food, how he breathes, whether easily or the reverse, if he is cheerful or depressed, and, if there is a cough, whether expectoration accompanies it or not. Observe how frequent pain is, and if it is not continual, when it returns; and also note the amount and character of sleep. Be very accurate in your observations and reports, remembering that if you can give a faithful account of the patient during the doctor's absence you will enable the latter to judge of the case as he cannot do if you make vague statements, such as, "Oh, he slept pretty well," "He only slept a little, I can't remember how long." There are various other matters concerning the patient which a nurse should observe and tell the doctor about, and not trusting to her memory, write down the result of her observations in anticipation of and to use during his visit.

Nursing is work; very real and often very hard. All those who really desire to do God's work in the world are thankful when it lies in their power to relieve suffering, or minister to those whom illness has laid low. At first, under the somewhat abnormal excitement of the beginning of an illness, it is comparatively easy to endure that which becomes more wearisome when days run into weeks, and perhaps you are in attendance for months together. Then, indeed, you need patience; and it will be given if you seek it in the right way.

You may have to bear ingratitude, or the irritation of temper that some sick people, usually amiable, develop. Be patient and considerate, putting yourself in the sufferer's place, and showing him all the forbearance and sympathy you would like yourself. Those who are strong and naturally independent find themselves chained to a sick bed; and those who, perhaps, have been accustomed to rule have to obey. By the way you act you can mitigate or increase these trials—for such they are, permitted for some wise purpose by a loving Father, but humiliating and trying in themselves.

Try always to conceal your weariness and never let a patient feel that he troubles you, or that you are not glad to render him what service you can. Do not spoil all the beauty of your kindly acts by an ungracious manner, and ever remember that the apostolic precept "be courteous" is more than ever necessary to be acted upon in a sick room. It is often absolutely necessary that you should be firm, and carry out a doctor's orders against a patient's will. This you can do kindly, avoiding all approach to a dictatorial manner, and never on any pretext considering roughness justifiable.

The patience and temper of a nurse are greatly put to the test during the stage of convalescence, for the patient then feels his weakness more, and the monotony of the days is less endurable. At this and any other time you must use your common sense in the matter of visitors, and in most cases it is well to ask the doctor what he thinks advisable. Some people like to be quiet, others prefer seeing their friends, and their wishes and the effect the visits have upon them have all to be noted.

Cultivate calmness, and however much you may be tried in seeing scenes of suffering, avoid making a fuss and giving way to excitement and emotion. Your kindness and sympathy can be well expressed in a quiet manner; and calmness, presence of mind, and unselfishness will enable you to be of very real service where the opposite qualities will render you practically useless.

A strong effort of will will often prevent you from fainting, and as an incentive to fighting bravely all weakness of mind or body remember,

"It is very good for strength,
To know that someone needs you to be strong."

THE SEA.

Thou wonderful, beautiful, glorious sea,
List to my thoughts as I gaze upon thee.
Smooth as a river, crystally clear,
Quiet and restful thou now dost appear.
Peaceful, calm ocean, like unto thee
Daily through life I am longing to be.

Again I am gazing, but changed is the scene,
Who would believe how calm thou hadst been?
Wave upon wave rolls dashing along,
As though each were singing a pitiless song;
Life is so changeful, wild ocean, like thee—
Thou treacherous, dangerous, wonderful sea.

Once more I am straining my dim, tearful eyes,
(As the wind seems to stir thee to utter sad sighs)
From those I love dearest I'm parting to-day,
To be borne on thy billows to lands far away.
To part or unite is thy work, deep, wide sea.
Where thou art not found "no more parting will be.'

* * * *

But whilst I am musing the wavelets still play,
And near where they ripple I wander to-day.
As memory bears me to years that have gone,
They seem ever murm'ring their sadly sweet song.
The happy, the peaceful, the sad days of yore
Are with me, and whisper their echoes once more.

Again. In thy depths, oh fathomless sea,
A far wider ocean seems open to me.
Its breadth, or its length, or its depth we can't know,
Yet for everyone it doth constantly flow.
'Tis peaceful, not fitful, nor angry like thee,
And leads to the land where there is "no more sea."

Mary Cavalier.

I believe that the want of our age is not more "free" handling of the Bible, but more "reverent" handling, more humility, more patient study, and more prayer.—*Bishop Ryle.*

OUR HOMES.

BY BELLA JOHNSON.

THE beautifying of the home may surely be classed amongst the important works of the day, as it is, I am certain, the duty of every wife or daughter to make the husband's, father's, or brother's surroundings as pleasant and pretty as possible. To the rich this is easy enough, but alas! more difficulties are in the way of those with only a limited income and limited time. I have many times read suggestions for home decoration, but have noticed that most of the writers lay great stress upon papering, distempering, new carpets, rugs, staining, etc. Now this is all very well when one is going into a new house, or for those with money, but there are many who have to put up with a carpet long after it is shabby, and an ugly paper which it is out of their power to have renewed; and it is to help them make their rooms lighter and prettier, at very little expense, that I am offering these suggestions, for, although I have read to the contrary, I know that a light chair-back, decorated with a bow of bright ribbon, on a dark chair brightens up a dingy corner considerably.

We will consider the bedroom first. Let everything in it be, as far as possible, light and pretty, and if the paint is worn off and shabby, you can paint it yourself at the cost of about one shilling, as all shades are sold at most oil shops in pound tins, varying in price from 4½d. to 8d., according to the colour. Before commencing have the old paint well washed first with hot water, soap and soda. About 2 lbs. of paint would be sufficient. White picked out with blue would be nice and cool-looking for a sunny room, while pink would be more suitable for a north aspect. The mantelpiece might be painted to match, while the fender can be dispensed with (unless in the winter a fire is needed), and the hearth whitened to meet the carpet or hearthrug. A mantel border and curtains may be added, but in many houses, especially in London, where things get so soon dirty and washing is an expense, it would be best to paint a scroll work or other design on the mantelpiece itself, and so make it too pretty to be hidden with curtains.

If the washstand is a wooden one, it should also be painted, and may be made a dainty article of furniture by the addition of some white or blue art muslin. Hang curtains of the muslin, edged with lace in front, drawn back with blue ribbon to the twisted legs, so as partly to hide the foot-bath or whatever stands on the shelf. A cover of white linen, edged with lace to match, over the top is an improvement; while a muslin splasher, fastened with ribbon bows, should be added.

Zinc hot-water cans, bath, etc., may receive a coat of paint (Aspinall, if not too expensive) to correspond with the rest of the room, and even the candlestick, if it be a tin one.

The curtains to the window should be blue art muslin, tied back with broad ribbon, and the short blinds of white muslin.

Bedspreads are a great improvement. They differ from a quilt, inasmuch as they only lie on the top of the bed and do not hang over, but they are a great save to the white quilt, which is such a heavy item in the laundress' bill. A nice one for the room described would be of white muslin lined with blue Turkey twill, which washes better than sateen, having a frill of muslin 8 in. deep all round. Another simple one, and perhaps more useful, might be made of blue Bolton sheeting, edged with a frill of coarse lace. For those who have time to give to the work, I would suggest one of white linen, with a band of blue Bolton sheeting all round, on which should be worked, in thick white silk, a trailing design of honeysuckle. This looks exceedingly handsome and is very durable. It can be edged with fringe or lace.

I would not advise curtains to the head of the bed, nor a valance, if the quilt hangs over sufficiently, but a curtain of white muslin, reaching to within one inch of the floor, fastened to the end of the bed, is an improvement.

The dressing-table, if a deal one, may be painted and have a narrow toilet cover to match the bedspread laid

across it in front of the looking-glass; or it can be entirely hung with white or art muslin. If the table stands in the window, take care to drape the *back* of the looking-glass, as well as the sides, with muslin.

Then the cane chairs and clothes-basket will look new again if painted with two coats of blue or white Aspinall.

A few texts on the walls are always an addition to a bedroom, or, indeed, any other room, but more so in a bedroom, where some words of comfort or encouragement can reach the eye of one lying on a bed of sickness. Such words as the following, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," have been a help to many. Cut the words out in white note-paper in plain block letters, and paste them on a strip of blue Turkey twill or Bolton sheeting with white of egg. Paste a strip of paper round the edge, and fasten to the wall with a bow of blue ribbon at each corner.

We will now pass on to the nursery, which should be the brightest and airiest room in the house. It would be far better if this room were not carpeted. Stained all over, with a few rugs laid down, is healthier and more cleanly, and the children can make such fine houses, etc., with the rugs. Crawling-rugs for babies are a great source of amusement, and therefore a great help to the over-tired mother or nurse. A good size is 1½ to 2 yards square, made of soft red or brown blankets, with the word "Baby" worked in large white letters. But a far prettier one can be made of a white blanket bound round with scarlet braid, and animals cut out in red Turkey twill sewn on. These should be of all sorts and sizes, and may be copied from pictures and enlarged, then buttonholed all round on to the blanket. Some of these rugs are very elaborate, having designs of all kinds worked in silks and wools on brown holland; but I think the two former are more useful, and I am sure are as entertaining as the handsomer kinds, for what does baby care or know if the cat he admires so much be of silk or calico.

Then let the walls be covered with pictures. One nursery I know of has its walls entirely papered with pictures of every description, large and small, coloured and uncoloured, to the endless delight of its young occupiers. In the window of this nursery are some flowers, also a canary bird; and the little ones as they grow old enough are taught to tend and care for the plants and the bird.

An easy chair is almost a necessity here, and should be covered with some bright-coloured cretonne. If the chair is shabby, but cannot be covered, a large square antimacassar of white linen, edged with fringe or lace, or otherwise ornamented, thrown over the chair, protects the children's white dresses, looks cleanly, and can easily be washed.

The hall of the ordinary small suburban house might often be improved with a little thought. A few pictures in plain gilt frames take away the bare look of the walls. Over the table might be hung a painted plaque; while close to the foot of the stairs, or by the door of the back room, will often be found room for a small table, on which a fern or other plant might stand. Then the little ante room beyond should have a light curtain to drape the door, or archway, as the case may be. Also at the door at the top of the first flight might be another curtain, and a bracket in the corner to hold a small lamp, with a red shade.

For the drawing-room I could suggest endless pretty little things to be carried out with the needle or paint-brush, but I am not writing for those who have plenty of time for fancy work, so will leave them out, and only offer a few suggestions easily adopted.

The new washable chair-backs are useful and pretty, check duster-cloth being sometimes used, having a tiny flower or star worked in silk or wool in each square. The shape for these and other chair-backs is a narrow double strip fitting the back, to be slipped over the top. White linen is often used, having a fan or flower embroidered in the corner in ingrain cotton. Sometimes fancy muslin is twisted about the chair in folds.

A pretty blind is a great improvement to a room, and bold designs can be very quickly embroidered on the new ones. The material should be cream linen cloth. On this trace a design right across about 4 or 5 inches from the bottom. Outline the design in button-hole stitch, then work connecting stitches from one part of the outline to the other where required. Then cut away the linen left between the outlines. This leaves the design apparent. Below this the wooden rod of the blind is fastened, and a worked edging to correspond is added, or coarse lace, about 3 inches wide, as a finish.

A really nice table-cover can be made of art serge, especially if a spray of flowers or conventional design is worked in each corner. A peacock-blue, embroidered in white, yellow, or crimson and gold, would be effective. This serge is very durable and wide, and, I think, only 2s. a yard. Covers for occasional tables may be made of the same. Art muslin, edged with lace, also makes pretty little covers.

Sofa cushions next claim our attention. These should be square, or nearly so. Formerly it was a work of time to make one, but now many persons content themselves with buying the cheap cushions that are for sale at many large drapers and re-covering them to their own fancy. This covering can be of almost anything. Soft coffee-tinted muslin, with a deep frill all round, or soft pongée silk, are pretty. But of course the covering must be chosen with regard to the colouring of the room. It is a good plan to make the cover come off and on easily, so that in winter warmer tones or thicker materials may be substituted. The frill which edges the cushion is made of a length of pongée or muslin folded in half and the edges turned inside the cushion cover. The walls should be well covered—pictures, if possible; but if there are only a few of these, brackets enamelled white, wall-pockets, painted fans, plates, etc., go far to furnish the walls with pretty effect. Flowers must find a place, if possible, one or two inexpensive wicker stands for ferns being a great improvement.

Lamp-shades are very easily made. Wire frames are only 10¾d., and can be had square or vandyked. Line the inside with pongée silk, to hide the wire. The outside may be treated in a variety of ways. One way is to put on some silk full, to match the lining, as a covering, commencing at the edge, and gathering towards the centre, where, after the lace is sewn on, it is neatly finished off with a twisted band and bow of ribbon. The fall round the edge is another strip of silk put on full; the lace is put over in the same way. The new flower-shades are very pretty, especially the large double poppy. All the leaves are cut in paper, and crinkled in the fingers to make them resemble the petals of the poppy, then carefully stitched on to the covering of the frame, and the edge is, as usual, trimmed with falling lace.

My readers will find it a good plan to have a drawer or box, in which to keep all sorts of pieces and odds and ends. Ribbons, silks, plushes, velvets, etc., however small, come in for crazy patchwork; while for pieces of muslins, cretonnes, flannel, etc., a use will be found sooner or later.

What we need most is not so much to realise the ideal as to idealise the real.—*F. H. Hedge.*

HOME MAKING.

BY ANNIE A. PRESTON.

A SHORT time since I was detained for a few hours in a pleasant New Jersey city, and took the opportunity to call upon a very dear schoolmate. I had met her occasionally upon her visits to New England, and had a curiosity to know what kind of a home-maker my gentle friend proved herself.

She saw me from her window as I alighted from the carriage—knew me, and opened the door for me herself.

"I could not allow anyone else to let you in," she cried, "although I am hardly presentable I know."

I looked at the dainty little creature in her plain but becoming wrapper, and saw nothing amiss, but she brushed her hand lightly over the little balls of rolled-up hair above her white forehead and said:

"Please do not imagine I went to breakfast with my hair like this. After the boys went I put up my frizzes so that they might be presentable when I met them again at dinner."

"So you think it worth while to make yourself lovely at home?"

"That is part of my religion. I believe that everything that we are obliged to have every day should be as nearly perfect as possible, tea and coffee, bread and butter, every-day garments and every-day manners, even the common-place every-day mother should not be left off the list."

I remained to dinner and met this widowed mother's five sons, the oldest ones grown up and in business, the younger about graduating from the high-school, and they were all as gentle and as lovely as—well as their gentle mother, and yet they were all brave and manly.

"And boys, too, are among the every-day excellencies," I said, when the last one had said "good day," and departed.

"Why not?" she replied. "I never enjoyed the popular saying about boys being awkward and rude and rough, unendurable any way. That class of boys are neglected and are objects of pity. My boys have never had any such awkward age. I am nice to my boys and they are nice to me. I dress for them and they dress for me. I entertain them and they entertain me. They are tender and thoughtful to me always. They like to have me go out with them, and are anxious always to have me share their pleasures."

"How have you managed them so well?"

"I hardly know, only from the very first I resolved to be as gentle and lovely with them as if they were girls, and they are as particular and orderly and sweet about the house as young ladies. I let them have their own way, I never nag them, I never speak uncharitably of anyone in their presence. I try to have them understand that their obligations are as Christian gentlemen, and that whatever else they may attain to they are never to deviate from that path. I pray for them by name every day, remembering that God lent them to me, and that I am to return them to Him. Yes, I do believe in boys being at their very best every day of their lives. That is part of my religion, too."

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

JANUARY is, of all the months in the year, that in which a good warm winter cloak that covers one up from head to foot is most desirable, and our illustration No. I, shows one of the newest and most comfortable shapes of this useful garment. It is made of one of the figured cloths that came out last year—say a dark mouse-grey, with a black pattern on it. They are not at all expensive, and some of the nicest are made by the Bradford Manufacturing Company. These really wear better than quite plain cloths, because they do not so readily show any soil or stain. A pretty change is to make the middle one of the three capes of plain black cloth; and still more economical and perfectly admissible, is to have the first and third capes of plain black with one of the figured cloth in the centre. The hat shown on this figure is one of the felts that are so much worn, either in grey or black, trimmed with ribbons of either colour, according to taste, and the money to spare. Grey, though neat, does not wear very well in ribbon, silk, velvet, or any fancy material, but its powers of endurance are much increased by mixture with black.

A very pretty and becoming but rather voluminous cloak is being sold in London, made of a fine soft material, only called cloth by courtesy, and much more like an untwilled cashmere or very thick good nun's veiling. It is made pretty much like an ulster with sleeves, but much fuller in the back; that is to say, in the lower part, and without any attempt to fit the waist, and is lined throughout with silk and domette quilted. Over this ulster there is a large cir-

cular cape, fitting nicely round the neck, where it is finished by a velvet collar, and this cape is lined with silk. There is not a particle of trimming, and the whole cloak is wonderfully light as well as warm. Anyone attempting to make such an one at home could materially reduce the cost by lining it with the remains of an old black or coloured silk dress, just facing down the fronts with new silk, and, if possible, lining the cape entirely with new. The buttons should be cloth ones, such as are used for gentlemen's coats; they give an air of neatness and refinement to the garment, while horn, or smoked pearl, or even metal buttons, look common and pretentious.

All dresses are cut rather long, and only just clear the ground. This is comfortable and looks nice indoors, though a shorter skirt should be used for walking in wet or dirty weather. It is not desirable to go out at such times if it can be avoided, but some of us have no choice, and must face all weathers. Of course cloaks and ulsters are made as long as the dresses, and French ones have a row of inch-wide mohair braid laid along the outside round the bottom. When this is frayed it is easily renewed, and as it comes just below the cloth, it bears the brunt of the friction.

Our second illustration, No. 2, shows the shape of a hat that is very fashionable, in dark straw. It is trimmed with bows of silk or ribbon, and one or two of the prepared aigrettes of sea-weed that have come so much into notice since the Hastings exhibition. They have all the effect of aigrettes, but are not any part of the plumage of a bird, and will also bear any amount of damp without injury. This figure also wears one of the pretty fur collars that are rather taking the place of boas. They are not over expensive, but in skunk cost from £1 to £25 each, and muffs to match are about £1. There are cheaper furs as well as much dearer ones; but skunk, if well chosen and carefully used, will last and look well for years.

Ladies who perhaps have a good winter-cloak over from last year, but require something better to wear on fine days or smarter occasions, will find that a good Irish McGee homespun cloth, with a slight curl on the surface, will make a capital small sling mantle. This is very easy for an amateur to attempt. A grey homespun can be finished off with grey Astrachan or a brown one with beaver cloth. Both of these are woven in different widths like ribbon velvets, and look extremely good. There is much less waste in buying them like this than in purchasing a yard or two of the stuff and cutting it up, and as the woven trimming has selvage on both sides, no time is lost in preparing it, nor is there any danger of its fraying out.

Almost all sleeves are of the leg-of-mutton order, and there is a very stylish look about them. Another form is a large, deep puff coming over the elbow, where it is met by a tight sleeve like an elongated cuff, and generally trimmed with braiding in deep vandykes with the points upwards. Swiss belts made in braiding are also worn, and these two adjuncts add a great deal to an otherwise plain dress.

Patterns of the cloak shown and of the sling mantle can be had by enclosing 1s. *and* 6d. *respectively in stamps, to M.L., at the office of the* MOTHERS' COMPANION.